

1493. r. 34.

PROPOSALS

For carrying on a certain

PUBLIC WORK

In the CITY of
The following PROPOSALS

EDINBURGH.

*Æquè pauperibus prodest, locupletibus æquè,
Æquè neglectum pueris senibusque nocebit.*

T O

The PATRON and PATTERN

For the purpose of

CASTLE-BUILDERS,

The following PROPOSAL is,

EDIMBURGH.

With all Submission,

DEDICATED,

B Y



The AUTHOR.

P R O P O S A L S

For carrying on a certain

P U B L I C W O R K

In the CITY of

E D I N B U R G H.

AMONG the several causes to which the prosperity of a nation may be ascribed, the number, conveniency, and elegance of its HOUSES OF OFFICE, are surely not the least considerable. A capital where these circumstances happen fortunately to concur in its necessary-houses, should naturally become the centre of all possible refinement. No sooner will the advantages which these laudable fabrics produce be felt and experienced in the chief city, than they will diffuse themselves through the nation, and universally promote and cherish that feeling, which is implanted, more or less, in the breast of every animal, the desire of easing nature.

Of this general assertion the city of London
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affords the most striking example. Upon the most superficial view, we cannot fail to remark its situation, happily qualified for the salutary purpose just now mentioned. It is built upon a large plain, gently shelving towards the Thames. Hence with the utmost facility is it supplied with houses of office, and common sewers, which all disembogue themselves into the bosom of that great and imperial river, in the neighbourhood of which the stately metropolis is situated.

It is true, that a paper drawn up in consequence of an act of the Royal Boroughs of Scotland attributes the prosperity and affluence of London to the neatness of its streets, and the conveniency of its open squares; to its buildings and bridges, its parks and walks; and to the magnificence of its court and theatres; especially when to these are added, its other rational entertainments of card-assemblies, and rope-dancing. But, with all due submission to the superior judgment of the Royal Boroughs, and their paper-writer, they have not investigated the true source of the prosperity of London. Its affluence can proceed from none of the causes which they have pointed out: for the convenient streets, and open squares, so highly extolled, do not belong to that part of the town where money is gained, but to that part where the wealth of the nation is squandered,—we speak of the nation as consisting of individuals. Neither are buildings the cause, but the



the effect of prosperity. And as to bridges, *Edinburgh* may boast of these, as well as *London*, or *Westminster*: for, to the east, she enjoys the benefit of a decent, not gaudy bridge, over the ancient river *Tumble T—d*, near *Comely Garden*, by means of which many of the necessities and conveniencies of life are conveyed to her, from the fertile counties of *Mid-Lothian* and *Haddington*; and to the west, she has the *Colt-bridge*, (celebrated by the retreat in the year 1745), from which quarter she daily derives incredible stores of cabbage, butter-milk, and *Corstorphin* cream. As to public walks, we may vie with the richest and most renowned cities in the universe: for we are at liberty to assure the public, that the walks of *Hope-park* are the finest in the world; and this upon no less authority than that of their proprietor himself, as may be seen more at large upon the cover of the *Scots Magazine*. That we have no court, is no real detriment to our city: for while the seat of government is at distance from it, it can never become the centre of luxury and vice. Courts of justice we have; and although the pleasures of the theatre be not cultivated with us, yet the rope-dancers and tumblers have been favoured with the presence and patronage of the magistracy. And as to card-playing, it is true, that we have not as much money to expend in that laudable occupation, as our friends in *London* have; but what we have, we yield freely up to it, our time.

The reader will now perceive, that to some other cause must the affluence of *London* be attributed; and that our comparative poverty must flow from some other source. In a word, *London* is opulent and beautiful, because it abounds in *necessary-houses*; *Edinburgh*, from being deprived of these conveniencies, is poor, and wallowing in mire.

To illustrate this farther, we need only contrast the delightful prospect which London affords, with that of Edinburgh, the metropolis of Scotland, when a separate kingdom, and still the chief city of North Britain, which is destitute of the advantages we have just now mentioned. Sorry we are, that the comparison is so apposite.

At *London*, all along both banks of the *Thames* there are *houses of office* erected, neat, pleasant, and of universal benefit. They remind one of so many little Heathen temples, dedicated to *Peace* and *Harmony*; or to the hospitable retreats of hermits, from the noise and confusion, the hurry and fatigues of an active life. In the back-court of every *private house*, there is, besides, a *more private house*, consecrated to the same purposes of cleanliness and conveniency. Add to these, the elegant and inoffensive luxury of water-closets, and we have at one view a lively representation of the felicity of *London*.

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Let us now turn our eyes homewards. *The healthfulness of the situation of Edinburgh, and its neighbourhood to the Forth, must, no doubt, be admitted as very favourable circumstances. But how greatly are these overbalanced by the disadvantages we at present lament?* A stranger from the southern part of this island, being at *Edinburgh*, desired after dinner to be conducted to the house of office; his guide led him to the street: A severe satyr upon this our metropolis; but, alas! too well founded. Nor did that traveller use the privilege which is indulged to all travellers, when he observed, that, at *Edinburgh*, every night at ten o'clock, it rained excrement. Can any of our most reputable citizens boast of their *houses of office*? If they could, we might say, that their filth would fall from a height that is almost incredible. And as to *water-closets*, their very name is as little known to us, as the confession of faith of the King of the *Antipodes*, or the laws of the *wild Irish*. *Close-stools* indeed we have; but *close-stools* are, at best, but a dirty conveniency. Besides, from the nature and situation of our houses, many families, sometimes no less than ten or a dozen, are obliged to ease nature overhead of each other, in the same building. Such being our condition, what can a stranger do, especially if he be one bred up to neatness and elegance? The call of nature must be obeyed; he who receives nourishment, must render up, or rather render down, the superfluous particles of food.

food. But where? Not, surely, in the street. Must he retire into one of our lanes leading to the north and the south? These, it is acknowledged, by reason of their steepness, narrowness, and dirtiness, can only be considered as so many unavoidable nuisances. Shall he retire into one of our upright streets, our stairs? They, it is acknowledged, are dark and dirty; how little suited then for the purpose we speak of, let every impartial, every considerate man, lay his hand upon his heart, and determine.

To these reasons it must be imputed, that so few people of rank reside in this city; that it is rarely visited by strangers; and that so many local prejudices, and narrow notions, inconsistent with polished manners and growing wealth, are still so obstinately retained. Mr Fletcher of Salton (a name well known in politics!) could not fail of remarking this. But his aversion to the English, and his abhorrence of the union of the two kingdoms, no doubt, stifled the dictates of his public spirit; for he only hints at what we have said, in the following short remark, *The bad situation of Edinburgh, has been one great occasion of the uncleanness in which the greater part of the people of Scotland live.*

To adorn this city with a public building which must be a national benefit, and thereby to remove the inconveniencies to which it has hitherto been liable, is the sole object of this proposal. Far be
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it from us to disparage the laudable endeavours of others, to *ridicule them as vain projectors*, or to depretiate their generous labours. May the race of castle-builders flourish; and we doubt not but that all house-carpenters and masons will say *Amen*. With pleasure, and gratitude, we acknowledge the reasonableness, expediency, and possibility of the present scheme *for beautifying Edinburgh, and supplying its defects*. We are persuaded, that it will be of great utility to the metropolis of *North Britain*, that, *after the example of Turin, Berlin, and many other cities, we have a new town reared, consisting of spacious streets, and large buildings, thinly inhabited*. We in no ways doubt, but the inhabitants of *Teviotdale* and *Caithness* will be greatly benefited by the landholders of those counties residing at *Edinburgh*; since by these means they will have an opportunity of vending their cattle and grain, at a market neither distant, nor inconvenient. We cannot suspect, that the citizens of the *Good Town*, the constant patrons of the polite arts and abstruser sciences, will be slow or unwilling to contribute their share of the expence requisite in the erecting a *suitable room for the lawyers library*, which is at present *an ornament* to the city; and may perhaps, one day, be also of some utility, if our young gowmsmen should ever find any superfluous hours for study, amidst the weightier employments of superintending public works, frequenting tea-tables,
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and partaking of the pleasures of the theatre. We from our inmost hearts declare, that we are persuaded, that *proper apartments for the judges of the courts of session and exchequer, for their going into before they are ready to take their seats on the bench, and for retiring to, are things much desiderate*; and that, if justice has not been speedily administered in this realm, it is to be imputed to the late unnatural rebellion, and to the want of a *water-closet* for the use of the judges. Nor do we deny, that it is reasonable and proper, that individuals should contribute, according to their abilities, for the erecting a repository for the public records: more especially as the Lord Register has much fatigue in consequence of his office, and a very small salary; and that the persons who are in power, could not, without injustice, apply any part of that salary to these public uses. But, above all, in this we rejoice, that we have a near prospect of discovering what is contained in the ten ancient and valuable hogsheads of unprinted acts of parliament, and mouldy records.

These, and the many other projects now on foot, are surely beneficial and glorious; but yet they do not supersede the necessity of *houses of office*. How expedient, how salutary, of what indispensable utility they are, we have already endeavoured to evince. We shall only use two further arguments, *which cannot fail of warming all* who consider them attentively,
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with a sincere concern for the success of this proposal, and for the prosperity of their country, which is intimately connected with it; and these arguments are, *public spirit, and affection for the present government.*

When *Cyrus*, the founder of the *Persian* empire, perceived that he was drawing near to death, he testified, as *Xenophon* informs us, great satisfaction, that his body was to be committed to the earth, there to putrify and vegetate, for the improvement of the ground in which it was to lie. Were there once a *public house of office* erected at *Edinburgh*, every inhabitant might enjoy daily that pleasure, of which the potent *Cyrus* was but once partaker! for surely the directors of the public works will not disdain to superintend the public dung, and see it properly applied. What transports then will every benevolent soul feel, upon the reflection, that he is without cease preparing a proper compost for future fields of corn, of wheat for the luxury of the rich, and of oats for the necessities of the indigent? At present the case is widely different: the greatest part of our excrement is suffered to waste away unprofitably. In winter, it is trodden under foot; in summer, it flies abroad in clouds of dust; in a word, the air which we breathe, the ground on which we walk, is full of filth and putrefaction. And how great soever the comfort may be which the *Moralist* feels from this, yet, to

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unphilosophical

unphilosophical noses, it is beyond measure disagreeable.

Were all the various sorts of human excrement carefully collected together, what wonderful and beneficial experiments might there not be made upon it! Let us but imagine a person at once a farmer, a naturalist, and a lover of his country, (though not without some knowledge of chemistry), prying into these recesses of nature, dissolving, discriminating, analysing! May such a person speedily exist, and may he be always furnished with a rich and various meal!

We come next to inforce the erecting of a *public necessary-house*, from an argument drawn from the duty and affection we owe to the present government. We are sensible, that this is a delicate subject, and we shall, in treating of it, endeavour to give no offence; for we address ourselves, not to a particular set of men, but to all *Scotland*. It has been confidently affirmed, that there are, even at this time, many disaffected persons in *Scotland*. Some have even said, that the whole nation was tainted with the rebellious infection. This last surmise we will be bold to contradict: for all the inhabitants of this realm never agreed unanimously in any one thing, except in going to stool at stated periods. We flatter ourselves that we have discovered the real cause of our nation's

nation's having been so often and grievously suspected; and it is, in short, this; *our being destitute of houses of office*. And indeed this conjecture is not without some appearance of probability, as experience and examples seem to confirm it. At *Dalnacardich*, for instance, a place situated in the rebel-estate of *Lochgarry*, there is no *house of office*; at *Avenmore*, in the loyal country of the *Grants*, there is one. Whence can this amazing difference proceed? Not, surely, from the nature of the thing: for both places are in the highlands, both are equally destitute of the other necessities of life; frying-pans, *Cheshire* cheese, and strong ale. The solution of this ænigma seems to be as follows. The disaffected party in *Scotland* have, with an unceasing acrimony of expression, declaimed against the union of the two kingdoms. Hence every art cultivated, every blandishment of life invented, or improved, by the *English*, has by our deluded countrymen been held in utter abhorrence. Among their other prejudices, that at *houses of office* has not been the least inveterate. And indeed the situation of the *necessary-house* erected upon the wall of the castle of *Edinburgh*, might induce many of the lower sort among us to imagine, that our independency was annihilated, by a standing army's being maintained, to sh—te down upon the faces of the much-injured *Caledonians*. That aerial *necessary-house* seems to lord it over our capital. Nor dare the poor dispirited inhabitants

tants murmur out their complaints: for so many port-holes are kept open, so many cannons are continually mounted, that if the Lieutenant-Governor should insist upon every passenger's pulling off his hat, in sign of obeisance to the garrison's *necessary-house*, all would be obliged to submit to this wanton exercise of arbitrary power. Such is the reasoning of the disaffected party.

Some shallow inquirers into human nature, have, from the same principle, accounted for the aversion the *Highlanders* have evidenced to the breeches, established among them by act of parliament. But this is a mistake. Their aversion proceeds from the regard they have to the *jure divino* prerogative of their wives. Indeed this is a very unnecessary scruple of conscience: for they might submit to their wives, and yet wear the breeches, the *insignia* of domestic authority, themselves, as the south-country inhabitants of *Scotland* have done for many generations.

It is to be hoped, from the uncommon attention which the legislature has given, for these six years past, to the improvement of this country, that all prejudices will be done away, and the diversity of opinions, as to the most independent method of *easing nature*, removed; and that a proposal for erecting a *public necessary-house* within the-city of *Edinburgh*, will be received

ceived with the joint applause and patronage of the nation. There prevails at present a general attention to the true interest of our country. Many branches of improvement are daily invented, carried on, perfected. Companies have been framed for the pickling of herring, and working gold-lace; for making sope, and sugar: A turnpike-road has been made from *Edinburgh* to the *Queensferry*, and the causey at the *Abbey-hill* has been repaired; four stage-coaches ply between *Edinburgh* and *Leith*; at which last place, *Messrs. Bulk and company* have instituted a manufactory of wheelbarrows and mouse-traps: In the *highlands*, forts, and weavers looms, have been erected; spinning-wheels have been transmitted into *Lochaber*; and the *British* colours have waved at *Berneray*. The art of printing has been carried to the highest perfection amongst us; as witness the late pompous and correct editions of *Monsieur Flaubert's compleat cook*, the *Reverend Mr. Ralph Erskine's poems*, the *essays and discourses of David Hume, Esq.* and the *Edinburgh almanack*. Nor do these books, already published, exceed, in elegance of types and paper, two performances now in the press, viz. *The history of all the lanes in Edinburgh*, and the *monumental inscriptions in the Grayfriars church-yard*; by *William Maitland, F. R. S.*; and, *The memoirs of the court of Augustus Cesar*; by *Principal Balckwell of Aberdeen*; illustrated with exact representations of *Heriot's hospital*, *Julius Cesar*,

san, and other great men of *Rome*, of *Cleopatra*, and the *Nether-bow port*, with General
 ——— standing centry at it. From all
 which, the improvements in trade and in arts,
 and from the happy disposition of the nation, we
 may reasonably hope, that every *Scotsman* will
 contribute something towards the erecting of a
public house of office in the metropolis; a truly
broad-bottom institution, not calculated for any
 particular set of men whatever. We say *con-*
tribute; for we do not presume so far as to in-
 treat the directors of the public works, to ap-
 ply any part of the *excrecence of their subscrip-*
tion-money for this purpose; far less would we
 offer to inroach upon that sacred sinking fund,
 the two pennies in the pint duty! We flatter
 ourselves, however, that the directors will
 deign to receive the contributions for this pu-
 blic work likewise. To them, and to their
 wisdom, we leave the situation and architecture
 of this useful fabric. They must determine,
 whether it is to be built in the ancient *Roman*,
 or in the modern *Gothic* taste. We expect to
 see *the first stones of it laid by the hands of the*
Lord Provost and Bailies, and to hear a herald
proclaim it, amidst the applause of a wondering
 multitude, *The public necessary-house of Edin-*
burgh; and on the front of this noble build-
 ing, let the following words, for the instruc-
 tion of posterity, be ingraven,

— NOBIS HÆC OTIA FECIT.



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